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VERMONT MAN GUILTY OF PASSPORT FRAUD

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE – United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced that PEDRO NOVA, 42, of 31 Elk St., Hartford, VT, pleaded guilty Friday, October 31 to committing passport fraud. NOVA was indicted in U.S. District Court in September after agents of the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service uncovered the fraud at the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

NOVA, a national of the Dominican Republic, pleaded guilty to willfully and knowingly making false statements to the State Department in a passport application in order to fraudulently obtain a United States passport. In March of 2003, NOVA submitted a passport application under a stolen identity in which he claimed that he was born in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. NOVA also submitted a Puerto Rican birth certificate belonging to someone else along with the false application.

The charges and apprehension of Nova resulted from Nova's activities being brought to the attention of an Identity Theft and Fraud Working Group organized in the U.S. Attorney's Office which brings together both federal and state law enforcement agencies to combat identity theft and fraud.

U.S. Attorney Colantuono highly commended the U.S. State Department's personnel, stating, "The vigilance of the National Passport Center personnel who first detected the fraud, followed by the swift and thorough investigation by Special Agents of the Diplomatic Security Service, stands as a fine example of law enforcement work at its best. This should serve as a warning to anyone contemplating identity fraud that they will be detected, apprehended, and prosecuted."

NOVA's sentencing hearing was set by U.S. District Judge Steven J. McAuliffe for January 28, 2004 at 10:30 A.M. Assistant U. S. Attorney Al Rubega is prosecuting this case.